

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OUAGAD 04009 151351Z
ACTION AF-08

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E.O. 11652: N/ATAGS: PINT, UV
SUBJ: UPPER VOLTA NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

1. UPPER VOLTA PUT OUT A MAJOR EFFORT IN ITS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS DECEMBER 11. THE TOTAL EFFECT WAS A FESTIVE ATMOSPHERE OF GROWING SELF-CONFIDENCE AND NATIONAL PRIDE, WITHOUT IGNORING THE PROBLEMS OF POVERTY AND DEVELOPMENT. A SENSIBLE PEOPLE HAD A SENSIBLE CELEBRATION, BUT ONE WHICH WAS AT THE SAME TIME FUN AND MEANINGFUL.

2. THE PARADE IN OUAGADOUGOU WAS MUCH LARGER AND LONGER THAN PREVIOUS YEARS. THIS WAS ACCOMPLISHED NOT BY REGIMENTATION, BUT BY COORDINATION OF PARTICIPATION BY SEEMINGLY EVERY GROUP AND SCHOOL IN TOWN, ALONG WITH GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND OF COURSE MILITARY UNITS. THE PLURALISM AND OPENNESS OF VOLTAN SOCIETY WAS PALPABLE IN THE EVENT. THOSE WHO WERE MARCHING ENJOYED MARCHING, AND THOSE WHO WERE WATCHING ENJOYED WATCHING.

3. ABOUT 2,000 TROOPS PASSED IN REVIEW, WHICH HAD BEEN THE TOTAL STRENGTH OF VOLTAN FORCES BEFORE THE MALI BORDER INCURSION IN
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PAGE 02 OUAGAD 04009 151351Z

1974-75. NO MILITARY EQUIPMENT WAS SHOWN OTHER THAN INDIVIDUAL

WEAPONS CARRIED BY TROOPS. ONLY ONE BATTALION WAS ARMED WITH MODERN AUTOMATIC RIFLES, WHICH ILLUSTRATES THAT UPPER VOLTA INCREASED THE MANNING LEVEL OF ITS ARMY DURING THE BORDER DISPUTE, BUT LITTLE ELSE. THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE TROOPS IN THE PARADE WAS LTC SAYE ZERBO, FORMER MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE PARADE WAS LED OFF BY AN ALOUETTE HELICOPTER (FLOWN BY A FRENCH PILOT) WHICH FLEW OVER LOW, TOWING A HUGH VOLTAN FLAG.

4. THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH ON RADIO ON DEC. 10 WAS A STANDARD STATE-OF-THE-NATION TYPE OF SPEECH (SEPTEL). CONTRARY TO RUMORS CIRCULATING HERE IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS, HE DID NOT ANNOUNCE A CHANGE OF CABINET MINISTERS.

5. MANY OTHER EVENTS WERE ROLLED INTO THE TWO-DAY CELEBRATION PERIOD TO MAKE THE OCCASION AS FESTIVE AS POSSIBLE: OPENING A FRENCH-DONATED RADIO-T.V. STUDIO, A SOCCER MATCH, A PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION, A CULTURAL SHOW OF MUSIC AND DANCE, AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS FORMALLY PRESENTING ITS WISHES TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS CABINET.

6. IN SUM, THE VOLTANS HAD A NATIONAL PARTY. THE PURPOSE WAS NOT TO IMPRESS OUTSIDERS, ALTHOUGH OUTSIDERS WERE WELCOME. IT WAS NOT TO RALLY PUBLIC OPINION BEHIND THE GOVERNMENT, ALTHOUGH THERE AMY BE A SECONDARY EFFECT IN THIS DIRECTION. THE MAIN IDEA WAS SIMPLY FOR THE VOLTAN PEOPLE TO CELEBRATE HAVING MADE IT THROUGH ANOTHER YEAR WITH THEIR HOUSE REASONABLY WELL IN ORDER.

GRAHAM

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